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DEPT FOR AF/C, AF/RSA, EB/TPP
DEPT ALSO FOR AF/EPS FOR CTRIMBLE, THASTINGS
DEPT PASS TO USTR FOR WILLIAM JACKSON
DEPT PASS TO DOT
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SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION ENGAGES RWANDA

¶1. Summary. At the request of USTR, Department of Transportation Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Susan McDermott led a delegation to Rwanda to explore areas of assistance. The GOR was keen on soliciting support for a COMESA air traffic management project, but the main focus of the visit was on identifying areas in which the USG could support aviation safety and security. The immediate outcome of the meetings was for the Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to return to Kigali in the next few weeks to conduct a security assessment, with subsequent recommendations, of the Kigali International Airport. End Summary.

¶2. Department of Transportation (DOT) Deputy Assistant Secretary Susan McDermott led a delegation of aviation safety and security experts from DOT, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to Rwanda from June 28 - July 1. The delegation was in the region to meet with the Secretary-General of the East African Community Secretariat and the Directors General of Civil Aviation of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda to determine a plan of action for the announcement of the first regional safety oversight organization in Africa. This was part of a program of continuing communication and coordination of assistance provided under the auspices of the Safe Skies for Africa Program. Deputy United States Trade Representative Ambassador Karan Bhatia asked the DOT to conduct an exploratory mission in Rwanda to investigate potential assistance to enhance its transportation system to increase economic growth and enhance trade opportunities.

¶3. GOR officials were eager to garner support for a project to control air traffic management for the entire COMESA region. This is an initiative the GOR has developed with the help of two American consultancies, Williams Aviation and ARCON. The GOR has been looking for ways to finance this project, yet the DOT delegation explained that the initiative was beyond their scope, especially as they would be interested in leveraging the work they have been doing for the past three years with the East African Community (EAC) rather than launching a new COMESA initiative.

¶4. The DOT delegation briefed GOR officials on their work with the EAC and explored areas in which Rwanda could benefit. The DOT has been working to harmonize regulations regionally to enable national aviation authorities to share technicians and inspectors, as they are in limited supply and expensive to train. The upcoming admission of Rwanda into the EAC encourages both the GOR and the DOT that Rwanda will be included in these efforts.

¶5. The meetings were very successful, as several areas of assistance were identified. The FAA representative offered to

review the Rwandan Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) ability to oversee airlines safety and current aviation regulations, and the TSA representative proposed a security assessment of the Kigali

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International Airport.

¶6. COMMENT. This visit was borne from the Trade Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) signed between the GOR and the US Trade Representative. Bringing a high level delegation from the US to investigate areas of potential USG assistance reinforced the USG's commitment to Rwandan economic development. Follow-up is required to ensure that the security and safety assessments offered to the Rwandan CAA are conducted and further areas of assistance by the DOT are identified. The meetings highlighted the fact that in a poor land-locked country such as Rwanda, addressing infrastructure concerns is a crucial trade facilitator.

THURSTON